for starting luxury bus service between Gangtok and Lhasa in the context of the opening of the Nathula border. However as per memorandum signed between Government of China and lndia.1t has been agreed to open the Nathula Pass only for the limited purpose of border trade and not for other purposes such as tourist movement and bus service.

Ex-Servicemen in India

† 3601. SHRI ISAM SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of ex-servicemen in India; and

(b) the details of the income earned by the ex-servicemen through the canteen facility provided to them in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) the number of ex-servicemen registered as on 31* December, 2004 is 19,06,693.

(b) As one of the welfare schemes, the ex-servicemen are given stores/ grocery items at rates which are comparatively cheaper in comparison to market rates through the Canteen Stores Department. Hence the question of earning any income by ex-servicemen does not arise.

Purchase of Mirage 2000 B Air Crafts

3602. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Air Force is planning to purchase Mirage 2000 B Aircrafts when compared to its original proposal to purchase F-16 for India; and

(b) if so, what are the main reasons for Indian Air Force to go in for purchase of Mirage Aircrafts?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Government constantly review the security environment and accordingly decide to induct appropriate equipment and to make other arrangements for adequate defence preparedness. It would not be in the interest of national security to give details.

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.